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150903Z Jun 01

2001HOCHI00734 - UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED PTQ8889

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	SRPP-00	EB-00	UTED-00
	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	NSAE-00	OIC-02
	OPIC-01	PRS-00	P-00	SP-00	SS-00	STR-00	TEST-00
	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PRM-01	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00
	/007W						

-----F91F2F 150909Z /38

FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5183  
INFO AMEMBASSY HANOI PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
AMEMBASSY BEIJING  
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
USMISSION GENEVA  
ASEAN COLLECTIVE  
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI  
JICPAC HONOLULU HI  
SECDEF WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 000734

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/BCLTV AND EAP/PD/JMARTIN  
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DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR DRL/IRF  
CINCPAC FOR FPA  
SECDEF FOR ISA/EA/LSTERN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM KIRF VM HUMANR RELFREE

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON CONTINUING BUDDHIST TENSIONS

REF: A. HCMC 0699 B. HCMC 0684 AND PREVIOUS

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: ON JUNE 7, ABOUT 100 MONKS, NUNS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE OUTLAWED UNIFIED BUDDHIST CHURCH OF VIETNAM (UBCV) ATTEMPTED TO TRAVEL TO QUANG NGAI PROVINCE TO MEET WITH UBCV SUPREME PATRIARCH THICH HUYEN QUANG AND TAKE HIM TO HCMC. POLICE IN HUE HAD WARNED THEM NOT TO GO, AND MOST OF THEM WERE TURNED BACK AT POLICE ROADBLOCKS ALONG THE WAY. ABOUT 40 TO 50 MONKS AND NUNS, IN AT LEAST TWO SEPARATE GROUPS, MADE IT TO QUANG NGAI PROVINCE BUT WERE PREVENTED FROM MEETING WITH THE PATRIARCH. THEY STAYED IN QUANG NGAI FOR SEVERAL DAYS, BUT MOST, IF NOT ALL, OF THEM HAVE NOW RETURNED TO HUE. IN HUE, POLICE REPORTEDLY CONTINUE TO SUMMON THE ORGANIZERS IN FOR INTERROGATION SESSIONS, BUT HAVE NOT ARRESTED ANYONE. AUTHORITIES IN QUANG NGAI PROVINCE REPORTEDLY ARE PRESSURING PATRIARCH THICH HUYEN QUANG TO MAKE A FORMAL REQUEST TO MOVE TO NEIGHBORING BINH DINH PROVINCE. IN HCMC, THICH QUANG DO, WHO HAD PLANNED THE JUNE 7 EVENT, REMAINS UNDER HOUSE ARREST AND IS NOT ALLOWED VISITORS. ALTHOUGH IN PHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH CONGEN, UBCV MONKS VOICE FRUSTRATION AND CONTINUE TO EXPRESS CONCERN FOR THICH HUYEN QUANG'S HEALTH, THEY HAVE NO PLANS FOR ANY

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FURTHER PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS. END SUMMARY.

INTERROGATIONS BUT NO ARRESTS IN HUE

2. (SBU) REF A REPORTED THAT POLICE IN QUANG NGAI PROVINCE HAD DETAINED ABOUT 20 UBCV MONKS, NUNS AND SUPPORTERS AFTER STOPPING THEIR TWO VANS AT A ROADBLOCK ABOUT TWO KILOMETERS FROM PATRIARCH THICH HUYEN QUANG'S PAGODA. IN PHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH SEVERAL BUDDHIST SOURCES IN HUE ON JUNE 14, POLOFF LEARNED TODAY THERE WERE 18 BUDDHIST MONKS AND NUNS IN THIS GROUP, AND THAT THEY WERE DETAINED ONLY 2-3 HOURS. REF A ALSO REPORTED THAT ANOTHER GROUP OF ABOUT 25 UBCV BUDDHISTS WHOM POLICE HAD PREVENTED FROM ENTERING THE PATRIARCH'S PAGODA REMAINED IN QUANG NGAI AND WERE CONSIDERING STAGING PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS. INFORMATION OBTAINED ON JUNE 14 INDICATES THAT MOST, IF NOT ALL, OF THE

BUDDHISTS WHO HAD TRAVELED FROM HUE TO QUANG NGAI HAVE RETURNED TO HUE AND ARE NOT PLANNING ANY FURTHER PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS.

13. (SBU) THICH THAI HOA AND THICH THIEN HANH EACH LED A GROUP OF BUDDHISTS FROM HUE TO QUANG NGAI. (NOTE: THICH THAI HOA AT THE TU HIEU PAGODA IN HUE WAS ONE OF THE MOST CAREFULLY WATCHED UBCV MONKS. THAT HE WAS ABLE TO ACTUALLY GET OUT AND LEAD A GROUP ALL THE WAY TO QUANG NGAI WAS QUITE A FEAT. END NOTE.) THICH CHI THANH AND THICH CHAN TRI (REF A MISSPELLED HIS NAME AS THICH TRAN CHI) ALSO ORGANIZED GROUPS, BUT DID NOT ACTUALLY TRAVEL TO QUANG NGAI THEMSELVES. POLICE IN UNCLASSIFIED

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HUE REPEATEDLY HAVE CALLED IN ALL FOUR OF THESE MONKS FOR INTERROGATION SESSIONS OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS, BUT HAVE NOT PLACED ANY OF THEM UNDER ARREST.

14. (SBU) POLOFF CALLED THE TU HIEU PAGODA JUNE 14, AND ASKED TO SPEAK WITH THICH THAI HOA. THE PERSON WHO ANSWERED THE PHONE SAID THAT THAI HOA WAS AT THE POLICE STATION, AND THAT HE HAS BEEN HELD THERE FOR QUESTIONING ALL DAY FOR THE PAST TWO DAYS, BUT ALLOWED TO RETURN TO THE PAGODA AT NIGHT.

15. (SBU) POLOFF WAS ABLE TO REACH THICH CHAN TRI AT THE THIEN LAM PAGODA. REF A REPORTED THAT POLICE HAD CALLED HIM IN AT 1:00 A.M. ON JUNE 7, JUST A FEW HOURS BEFORE 60 MONKS, NUNS AND SUPPORTERS ASSEMBLED AT HIS PAGODA TO TRAVEL TO QUANG NGAI. ON THE TELEPHONE, CHAN TRI SEEMED NERVOUS AND HESITATED SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE CONVERSATION. HE SAID THAT "SOMEONE" HAD COME TO HIS PAGODA AT 1:00 A.M. ON JUNE 7 TO TELL HIM HIS MOTHER WAS SICK, HE HAD GONE TO HER HOME - NOT TO THE POLICE STATION - AND THAT WAS WHY HE DID NOT JOIN THE DELEGATION TO QUANG NGAI. HE ALSO SAID THE ATMOSPHERE IN HUE WAS MUCH CALMER TODAY THAN IT HAD BEEN A FEW DAYS BEFORE.

16. (SBU) POLOFF ALSO REACHED THICH CHI THANG AT THE PHUOC THANH PAGODA. HE BEGAN TO RELATE THAT AUTHORITIES AT THE PROVINCIAL, DISTRICT, AND HAMLET LEVEL WERE CONSTANTLY SUMMONING HIM IN FOR QUESTIONING WHEN LOUD STATIC CAME ON THE LINE. CHI THANG SAID THE STATIC WAS DUE TO POLICE INTERFERENCE ON THE PHONE LINE. WE WERE UNABLE TO CARRY ON THE CONVERSATION. (NOTE: REF B REPORTED THAT THE PHONE LINES AT ALL THREE OF THE ABOVE PAGODAS HAD BEEN CUT. THAT THE LINES ARE NOW WORKING AGAIN IS AN IMPROVEMENT, BUT IT IS OBVIOUS THAT POLICE ARE STILL LISTENING. END NOTE.)

17. (U) ALSO ON JUNE 14, POLOFF SPOKE WITH PENELOPE FAULKNER OF THE UBCV INFORMATION BUREAU IN PARIS. SHE SAID THAT IN ADDITION TO THE GROUPS OF BUDDHISTS LISTED ABOVE AND IN REFTELS WHO HAD ATTEMPTED TO TRAVEL FROM HUE TO QUANG NGAI, ANOTHER GROUP OF 17 UBCV MONKS ATTEMPTED TO DEPART HUE ON JUNE 7 BY MOTORCYCLE. BEFORE THEY LEFT THE CITY LIMITS, HOWEVER, A GROUP OF UNCLASSIFIED

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ABOUT 20 YOUNG MEN, ALSO ON MOTORCYCLE, ACCOSTED THEM, THREATENED THEM, AND EVENTUALLY CHASED THEM BACK TO THEIR PAGODAS.

QUANG NGAI READY TO MOVE PATRIARCH, BUT NOT TO HCMC  
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18. (U) FAULKNER ALSO TOLD POLOFF THAT FOR THE PAST TWO WEEKS, AUTHORITIES IN QUANG NGAI HAVE BEEN PRESSURING THICH HUYEN QUANG TO SIGN A REQUEST TO MOVE TO A MONASTERY IN NEIGHBORING BINH DINH PROVINCE. (THE PATRIARCH HAD BEEN THE HEAD OF THE MONASTERY AT SOME TIME IN THE PAST.) BINH DINH IS JUST SOUTH OF QUANG NGAI, STILL SEVERAL HUNDRED MILES FROM HCMC. IT IS HARDLY LESS ISOLATED THAN QUANG NGAI. THE PATRIARCH REPORTEDLY REFUSED TO SIGN THE REQUEST.

19. (SBU) IN HCMC, THICH QUANG DO REMAINS UNDER HOUSE ARREST. HIS PHONES ARE CUT OFF, AND POLICE HAVE ALLOWED HIM NO VISITORS SINCE THE HOUSE ARREST ORDER WAS PUT INTO EFFECT ON JUNE 1. ONE UBCV MONK ATTEMPTED TO VISIT QUANG DO ON JUNE 10. HE ENTERED THE PAGODA, BUT THE PLAINCLOTHES POLICE WHO GUARD THE STAIRS TO THE RESIDENCE POLITELY TOLD HIM HE COULD NOT GO UPSTAIRS.

COMMENT  
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110. (SBU) POLICE SUCCESSFULLY PREVENTED THE UBCV BUDDHISTS FROM TAKING PATRIARCH THICH HUYEN QUANG TO HCMC WITHOUT PERMISSION. UBCV MONKS IN HUE CONTINUE TO UNCLASSIFIED

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SOUND FRUSTRATED AND RESENTFUL, BUT THEY DO NOT PLAN  
ANY FURTHER PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS AT THIS TIME. ALTHOUGH  
IT APPEARS SECURITY FORCES HAVE THE SITUATION WELL  
UNDER CONTROL, CONCERNS FOR THE HEALTH OF THE PATRIARCH  
IS AN ISSUE THAT WON'T JUST GO AWAY. THE GVN COULD  
SAVE ITSELF A LOT OF TROUBLE BY SIMPLY MOVING THE 83-  
YEAR-OLD MONK TO HCMC, WHERE GOOD MEDICAL TREATMENT IS  
AVAILABLE, BEFORE HIS HEALTH STARTS TO FAIL.

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